

Mother Moon is Torn in Half, and Her Blood Creates Maize

This is the way it was, after Sun was finished shaping the seven layers of the world: not much is happening in the garden of the gods. Only the first gods are there, it is just Sun and Moon and ah-Puch by themselves. There are not yet any little gods and goddesses running around making noises and throwing things. Sun is tired from his work, his radiance is dimmed and the fires around his face are pale. Mostly he rests in the cool shade, he sits cross-legged on the paving stones of his palace in the late afternoon and listens to the chatter of the animal lords who live there as well. Moon is not speaking to him, she wanted more butterflies to be made during the creation, and he made bats instead. So she amuses herself with his twin brother, those two go all over the garden of the gods poking into this cave and that waterfall, seeking little treasures that came into being when everything was made.

When Sun was not resting he liked to watch our ancestors living in the world below his palace. Our world is the fourth world, it is said, and our sky is the underbelly of the garden of the gods. In those days our ancestors also had no babies, they lived their days finding food and praying and making sacrifices of incense and flowers. There were no special foods for them yet, Sun just let them fend for themselves, and we remember those first people eating grass and reed roots, insects and boiled tree bark. The sides of their mouths became red-stained from such food, and they were very thin from the poor nourishment, but still they were pleased to be alive at all and showed their gratitude in many ways. Sun's nostrils were often filled with the scent of copal incense, and the heated sparks from burning blood rekindled his fires. As far as he could see, all the way to the mountains and all the way to the great ocean, his people cared for each other and were faithful to their creator.

But this was what was happening over the mountains, on the other side of the passes: our ancestors were being taken, in secret. There were ambushes on the jungle paths, men went hunting in the mountains and did not return. The women were not safe, they disappeared by the rivers and by the streams. Even in those early days ah-Puch was amusing himself in such ways. He walked among our ancestors, seeking the criminals and the insane and the unlucky, and he set them upon Sun's other people. Many unfortunates were captured and taken away as slaves for ah-Puch's twisted servants. The people beyond the mountains were not afraid for



their missing loved ones, because they didn't yet know fear. All they knew is that sometimes people went missing, and though they worried they trusted their people would someday return to them. So they did not pray to Sun for help with these missing ones, they just gave thanks for being alive. And so it went for many years, and more men and women disappeared, and ah-Puch's children built their own villages far away from Sun's watchful eyes, and they kept Sun's people for slaves.

One day our ancestors from the sun-lit lands wandered over the mountains and found the other people living there, and there was much celebration as the two tribes began to trade and marry each other. It was not long before our ancestors from the sun-lit lands heard that people sometimes went missing in the lands over the mountains, and they raised their concerns to Sun, in their prayers. Sun heard these stories in disbelief but looked over the mountains anyway, and what should he see but ah-Puch's people taking his own people as slaves! This was the making of the first fight in the garden of the gods, Sun surrounded ah-Puch and demanded the release of his people. Well, ah-Puch was not about to give up his slaves. So he fought with Sun, he drew forth a terrible black knife of gleaming obsidian and tried to cut Sun's throat. That was a very close thing, Sun had never been attacked before and hardly knew his brother's face. So ah-Puch scratched Sun's throat with a great slice of his knife, there was blood everywhere. Sun just used his fists, and the two brothers punched and slashed each other, many and awful were the cuts and welts they caused in each other's flesh. Moon didn't see any of this, she was away talking with the animal lords or something, the two male gods were alone in their quarrel.

Though Sun fought with great strength, he could not defeat his brother, whose star is the star of war itself. Finally he made a great hole open under his brother, and ah-Puch fell all the way from the garden of the gods in the fifth world down to the underworld in the first world. It was a long fall, and when he hit the marshes of that place he dug a great wet hole with his body.

Then Sun made a fire and burned magical incense, right there in his own palace, and he bled himself from his genitals and his fingers and his tongue. He said words of power, and he sealed his brother out of the garden of the gods. That was how ah-Puch came to live in the underworld, never again could he ascend.

And here is the surprise of Moon when she returns from her



conversations with the animal lords and finds Sun all cut up and bloody, and his brother missing.

“Where is the lord of the night?” are her words to Sun, but Sun only shakes his head.

“He is gone now, he cannot return to this place. He is doing disgusting things to my people, and I have driven him out of here.”

Well, Moon is shocked to hear such a thing, she has never seen ah-Puch’s true face and thinks him quite handsome and very amusing as well. In those days Sun and Moon are not married, Moon is still a young woman and cannot decide between these two gods. So she is giving them both her favors, she is treated well by Sun and ah-Puch both.

“What is happening to your people?” she asks Sun, and he tells her what has been occurring in the lands over the mountains. She looks for herself, but her vision is not as sharp as Sun’s, and she sees nothing amiss in the world of our ancestors.

“You are making this up,” she tells Sun. “You are jealous of ah-Puch’s attention to me, and that is why you two are fighting. Bring him back, and the two of you become brothers again.”

But Sun won’t do this, not after what he has seen. He wants his stolen people released from their misery, out of the slave pens and back with the rest of our ancestors. So he tells Moon no, ah-Puch will never again be welcome in the garden of the gods, and there will only be war between them from then on. So Moon leaves him and goes away from the garden of the gods to the first world far below. She is following the path of ah-Puch’s fall and slides down from the fifth world to the fourth to the third to the second and finally to the marshes of the first world, where everything is sickly and pale.

After a long time walking she comes to a palace that ah-Puch has made in the first world, that land we call the underworld. There are many spirits there, spirits of death and disease, but they have no place yet in the world. They are just lazing around, they are just bored. ah-Puch is in his palace, he is speaking with nine wicked spirits he wants as commanders in a new game he wants to play. He has questioned these spirits at length, many days have been spent learning their thoughts and their abilities. ah-Puch does not play around when he decides on a new path.

“Ah,” says ah-Puch when Moon walks into his palace. “Lovely Moon, come to see me here, in my new home!”

Moon is confused by the luxuries of that place, there is jade and obsidian, pearl and bits of gold. There are fine incense burners, and hide-



bound books full of powerful spells. There is food in plenty, all kinds of fruits and nuts and meats are laid out on the tables. There are slaves to serve everything and to take away what is left over. The palace of Sun is not so fine as ah-Puch's palace, Sun has busied himself with the creation and has not had time to put his house in order, and Moon feels her heart beat harder for all the fineness of ah-Puch's palace.

"Meet my commanders," says ah-Puch. "These nine spirits are the bolontiku, the lords of night."

And the nine lords introduce themselves by name, one at a time. They are: Watery Eye, Bone Snapper, Bloody Fang, Pus Wound, Blood Sucker, Skull Breaker, Black Wing, Yellow Mist, and Stalker. Each gives his or her name and then bows to Moon, who is pleased at this courtesy. She is looking right at ah-Puch's face but sees only handsomeness and beauty, she cannot see what Sun now sees there.

"We are creating a new game to play with my brother," says ah-Puch. There is great humor in his voice, and all the bolon-tiku laugh hard laughs that make Moon's spine tingle.

"What sort of game?" says Moon.

"This is something no one has ever seen before," says ah-Puch. "It is called 'war', and it is a fight between many people that does not stop until blood is spilled."

"It can go on longer than that," says Bloody Fang, whose idea 'war' was.

"How can it go on longer than the spilling of blood?" says Moon. She has seen men fight before, our ancestors are not perfect. They quarrel over meat and fruits, they quarrel over women, they quarrel over who builds their huts where. Sometimes men beat each other with poles, sometimes they cut each other with knives. Moon does not like this sort of thing, but she knows people do it anyway.

"Well," says Bloody Fang, in a purring voice, "if you spill enough blood, you get something no one has ever seen before. It is called 'death', and it is the end."

"The end of what?" says Moon. Her curiosity is great, Bloody Fang is a smooth talker and has all her attention on this new game.

"The end of living!" says ah-Puch. "It has taken great amounts of time to find 'death' and make up 'war' to create it."

"This doesn't sound like a good thing," says Moon. She has never seen ah-Puch create anything, and these innovations surprise her. She is seeing a new face on her lover.



“Tell her about the other new thing,” says Stalker. “It is a wonder of ingenuity.”

ah-Puch smiles, his face breaks open from side to side and shows all his many teeth. “This one is called ‘murder,’” he says. “It is the snapping of the sacred cord, the unraveling of the sacred thread. The white flower closes and never opens again. When one person kills another, this is ‘murder.’ It is the end of them. We have tested it many times now, on Sun’s worthless people.”

Moon doesn’t know what ‘kills’ means. No one has ever been killed in the sun-lit world before. She has seen men beat each other senseless or cut each other, but they always stop before anyone is killed.

The bolon-tiku laugh, again comes the hard laughter of the lords of the night. ah-Puch laughs with them, great is his merriment at all these new ways he is bringing into being.

“Bring a slave,” he calls to the spirits of death and disease, and they go away to the slave pens and drag in a young woman, Doe Eyes is her name. She is standing there in confusion, wondering what those lords want of her, when ah-Puch says,

“Today you are a demonstration for this goddess. You don’t have to do anything, just stand there.”

And Bloody Fang gets up from his seat and walks behind her and stands there with his mouth open. Moon knows some animals eat each other, but she is not able to think like ah-Puch and the night lords, she cannot understand why this lord’s fangs are at this girl’s throat.

“Can you see this woman’s white flower?” says ah-Puch. What he means is this: in the center of the creation is the great world tree, it grows from its roots in the underworld to its trunk in the fourth world, to its heavenly branches in the garden of the gods and the sixth and seventh worlds. This tree grows countless white flowers, each one is the soul of a new person, and when these fall into our world a woman becomes pregnant and gives birth to a fresh soul. We say a person’s life is their white flower, it is the soul that gives us life in the beginning and the soul that departs back to the world tree when we die, to be born again.

Moon can see the white flower that lives in the young woman’s heart.

“Yes,” she says, “I can see this person’s soul.”

And ah-Puch nods at Bloody Fang, who sinks his teeth into the young woman’s neck and tears out the great arteries there. Blood sprays everywhere, onto the floor and the table, onto the face of Bloody Fang, who licks it away with his tongue. And the young woman, Doe Eyes,



cries out and then perishes. And Moon sees the white flower in her heart curl up and ascend back to the world tree, it is the end of Doe Eyes she has witnessed. Moon has never dreamed of such a thing, she is staggered by 'murder,' and 'death,' for one heartbeat she is seeing ah-Puch's true, wicked face.

"What happens to her now?" says Moon, in shock.

"Oh, who knows?" says Bloody Fang. "But her body is here, see? It can be eaten." And sure enough, spirits come and take away Doe Eyes' body and prepare it for eating by the night lords. Again is shock for Moon, these lords are gorging themselves on the flesh of Sun's people down here in the twilight marshes of the underworld.

"'War' is the same way," says ah-Puch. He is watching Moon most carefully to see what she thinks of his inventions. So far he sees only amazement on the face of Moon, and he knows she has not yet seen him completely. That is the beginning of lies and duplicity, there is the very moment when deception began. Ah-Puch knows it is necessary to hide the ugliness of his new ways from Moon, she would be disgusted if she truly understood them.

"'War' is 'murder' and 'death' with many people. It can go on a long time. We are talking with Sun's people in the mountains in the fourth world far over our heads. We are talking with them in dreams, we are sending spirits to talk with them in visions of blood and smoke. We are convincing them to fight with the people across the mountains, we are convincing them that those are the ones who took their brothers and sisters."

Now the bolon-tiku laugh themselves to tears, all these new games are great pleasure for them. Our ancestors over the mountains are beginning to believe that it is the people of the sun-lit lands who have stolen away their missing ones, and they are following the directions of the spirits to make new instruments. These are called war spears, war clubs, war axes. They are not for killing animals but are for killing people. Great is the cunning of the bolon-tiku, their cleverness is without end.

"Tell her about 'disease'," says Watery Eye, this oldest daughter of ah-Puch. She is the strongest of the night lords, 'disease' is her very own idea.

"Another new thing," says ah-Puch. "It is the slow unraveling of the sacred cord through the grinding down of the flesh, you wouldn't understand but it is very funny to us. Already we have tried it on many slaves, their miseries and suffering go on and on before 'death'. My brother



thinks his people are so clever and so strong. He thinks himself so brilliant for creating live beings to pay the three of us respect. Ha! What is their respect to us? They are funnier falling down in agony, they are more nourishing when their flesh is cooked for our pleasure. This is how they can serve us. How do you like this palace, Moon? It is not grand? My spirits built it for us, my slaves built it for us.”

“It is magnificent,” says Moon. She sees the finery but not the pain that went into making it, unnecessary hurt is becoming the way of ah-Puch.

“Come here, Moon,” says ah-Puch, and she goes to the head of his table. The nine lords are watching with black eyes, they are all wondering what will happen between these two powerful gods.

Suddenly ah-Puch slaps Moon across the face, and the heat rises in Moon’s cheeks.

“It is time for you to wake up,” says ah-Puch. “There is not room in this creation for Sun and myself, both. Day and night can no longer share. You cannot keep giving us both your favors. You must choose, there can only be one of us soon.”

Moon’s eyes have become small with anger, sharp is her strength when she slaps ah-Puch.

ah-Puch laughs. “Yes, like that,” he says.

“You are both crazy,” says Moon. “All Sun does is create, create, and create new animals and new plants and new peoples. He is filling the fourth world up with these humans, they are becoming endless.”

“Oh,” says ah-Puch, “‘Disease’ will take care of that. ‘War’ will take care of that. Even ‘murder’ will strike many down.”

“And you,” says Moon. “All you do is look for ways to damage and injure Sun’s creation. Where are the clever things of your own, what will you add to all that is?”

And that is when Lord Jaguar walks out into the room. Black is his fur, his entire coat is black, and a deep purring comes from his throat. He is very large, and very potent, he looks at Moon without fear.

“This is Jaguar,” says ah-Puch, and the nine lords of the night let out a great cheer for this, their champion. “He walks at night, he murders whom he wishes, he is my greatest and most important invention. Sun has created nothing like this animal lord. All his cats are small in comparison, this is the strongest of them all.” He pats Jaguar’s ears, and Jaguar growls at Moon.

“So,” continues ah-Puch. “Lord Jaguar is my invention. Jaguar, and



death, and murder, and war, and disease are all my inventions. Decide now, day or night, the underworld or the garden of the gods.”

Moon is stuck and does not know what to do. The fearful inventions of ah-Puch and his commanders are beyond the reach of her heart, she cannot truly take them in yet. She knows Sun has seen none of this, great changes are coming to the world and Sun is unaware that his people’s destruction is being plotted even as he rests in his garden high above.

But for Moon ah-Puch is still handsome, he radiates much heat like his brother, and her own blood is heated by his presence. He sees this and laughs at her, they all laugh at her as ah-Puch carries her away to his sleeping room and takes her favors from her. When he is finished he throws her out of his palace, spirits come and drag her out by force, she is dumped down the stone steps and into the swamps. Indignant, she summons a moonbeam and rides it back to the garden of the gods, back to Sun, who is eating a nance fruit or some such.

“Your brother is busy,” Moon says to him. “He is doing frightening things in the world below. He and his nine lords of the night, they are all thinking and working together, down in the first world.”

“My brother is no longer my concern,” says Sun. “I have decided I should not be lonely here, with just you for company. I am going to summon other gods and goddesses to my palace; there are quite a few of them skulking around, at the edges of the creation. They’re wondering if it’s safe to show themselves, yet.” And so Sun ignores Moon and burns some copal incense in a great burner in front of his palace. Smoke rises and goes to all corners of the heavens, it grows heavy and sinks into the worlds below, even ah-Puch’s underworld is smoked out by Sun’s incense burner. And there they are, gods and goddesses understand this signal and begin to show themselves at Sun’s palace. There are introductions, and good food and drink are passed around. Moon sees she is being ignored and flicks her skirt at Sun and his new guests.

“What do you want from me, Moon?” says Sun. “You are just playing around with my brother and myself, time passes and you think you can have the both of us. Do you want children? Whose children will you have, anyone who will take you?”

Moon has never heard of ‘children’ before, she doesn’t know what Sun is talking about. This is a new idea Sun has had, to save himself some work. In those days animals and our ancestors do not have babies, every time Sun wants to increase his people he has to make them himself. So he has dreamed up a way for animals and people to make themselves, so



he doesn't have to.

"I don't know what you mean," says Moon, and Sun is amused. "Oh, it's just a little thing," he says. "Children are a way for people to make more people. Gods and goddesses will be able to have children as well, I have decided." So he explains that children are small people who aren't fully formed yet, and they must be cared for.

"This would be a good job for you, Moon," he says. "Your creations are all small things, birds and butterflies and flowers. This is much more powerful, you will be amazed if you try this."

Still Moon is undecided, she has no responsibilities at this time and doesn't really want any. She is thinking of ah-Puch and his great heat, she is attracted to him in the underworld. Sun annoys her with his amusement and his trying to give her responsibilities.

"Your brother has found ways to cut the sacred cord and shrivel the white flower souls of your people, down there in the world," says Moon. "You should be thinking about that. He has created a fierce heat that his servants put into people that burns them up and takes away their lives. This is called 'disease', and he and his commanders are going to release it in the world."

Even Sun has never heard of things like this before, it is ah-Puch's genius to murder other beings and smash them down. He thinks Moon is making this up, such things cannot actually exist. So he just nods at her, he turns his attention to other matters.

Time passes, how much nobody can say. Time is different for the gods and the goddesses than it is for us. There are a dozen gods and goddesses now living in the garden of the gods, they have arisen from the creation or come from outside it, somehow. Each brings gifts and cleverness, and they all sit together in council and improve Sun's creation in various ways. In the underworld, ah-Puch and the bolon-tiku are improving their methods of destruction: many of Sun's people, our ancestors, are captured and murdered in sickening ways. For pleasure ah-Puch has his servants place bodies of murdered people in the lands beyond the mountains, where they will be found by our ancestors. People come across their murdered loved ones and realize they will never return, and grief is born into the world. Great is the fear and confusion of our ancestors, no one has seen death before. Prayers are sent to Sun, but he is busy with the larger creation, he just sends the usual light and warmth and does not listen too closely to what his people are saying.



It is not so long after this that ah-Puch sends many servants all over the lands beyond the mountains and even into the sun-lit lands of the valleys, to spread disease in all directions. Many people sicken and die, they vomit blood and bile and choke to death. They shake from chills and fever, they develop weeping pustules, their hair falls out and their nails fall out and sores break out on their skin. Anguished are the cries of Sun's people, much copal is burned and much blood is spilled to raise new prayers to Sun. Sacrifices are given day and night, there are flowers and feathers and animals. At last Sun hears these prayers and gazes down upon the world below, and great is his disbelief at what he sees happening there. Our ancestors are dying in the thousands and the tens of thousands, whole valleys are depopulated. The lands over the mountains are seas of illness and misery. Everywhere the servants of ah-Puch are unchecked, the wicked have the run of the world. People are murdered right under Sun's face, his eyes are popping from seeing such things. Men and women alike are grabbed and dragged from their huts, their throats are cut, their hearts are punctured. Sun's people barely know how to fight, only a few have the strength of warriors. ah-Puch has had much time to plan his viciousness, he and his commanders are brilliant at releasing terrors into the world.

This is Sun fighting his brother, rays of burning light fall into the sun-lit valleys and even into the mountains beyond them. For the first time Sun's light fills the lands beyond the mountains, for the first time Sun's strength floods the entire world. The other gods and goddesses have never seen anything like it, Moon has never seen Sun so strong or so angry. Here are the first sunburns, the other gods and goddesses are reddened by Sun's fury and must turn their faces from his rage. The servants of ah-Puch are incinerated where they stand, spirits and wicked men alike are turned to pillars of ash that blow away in the winds. Sun lets out a roar to see such suffering among his people, his fury at his brother is without measure, and he becomes a sunbeam and shoots down like a falling sky rock.

There is an explosion when Sun lands in the underworld, tremendous is the force of his impact. Fire roars, the underworld is set alight. Every tree and every bush and even wet reeds burst into flame and are consumed. The stones of ah-Puch's palace are shattered by the bucking of the ground, ceilings and walls fall in, the evil spirits of the underworld are knocked off their feet and lie groaning on the earth. Sun rises to his feet and gazes about him, there is nothing but ruin. Up the steps of ah-Puch's palace



he strides. The black stone melts beneath his feet, they say that to this day ah-Puch's palace is marked with Sun's footprints.

Into the palace he goes, there are small rooms and then the big one where the bolon-tiku are seated, all nine lords are in council when Sun comes into that room. And here is the humbling of the commanders of the night, it takes only the time of two breaths for it to happen, only the time of three heartbeats goes by before they are defeated. The bolon-tiku are the greatest of evil spirits, ah-Puch sought them for ages before finding them all, some of them arose outside the creation and came into it just for the purpose of causing terror and misery. They are ready for Sun, that is what they think. They have lived long in the underworld, plotting their murders and their deaths, plotting their diseases and the suffering they will inflict on the people of the sun. They have never been challenged before, they have never met anyone who is their equal, much less their superior. This is what it takes for them to learn their places: Sun comes into their chamber and takes one, two, three steps into the room. His body is burning, fire flares from his skin and gusts from his mouth. His eyes are red with heat. He turns his head toward the bolon-tiku and merely looks at them, he gifts them with only a touch of his power, and they are broken and thrown down. Their wills are cracked in half like sticks in the hands of a strong man. Eyes roll, screams come from their mouths, not one of them can even point a finger at Sun to threaten him. Gone are their murders, their deaths and their diseases. Gone is their cleverness, their trickery, and their evil spells. Their magic faints dead away, their knowledge of evil dwindles to nothing, they cannot even call out to their servants to give Sun a fight. They are fleeing, smacking into walls and stumbling over broken stones, running into each other and weeping with fear. They are slamming into their table and tumbling over their chairs, they run and run and run away. Out the doors of ah-Puch's palace they go, for days they will run through the burning underworld, all around them they witness the horror of their servants falling by the thousands in the fires of Sun's anger. ah-Puch has been gaining servants for ages and thought he had an army, but that is gone now, in one morning Sun has destroyed his dreams. The bolon-tiku are shivering as they flee, their bodies shake like sickly children, their teeth will chatter for years before they regain control of themselves.

It would have been better for everyone if Sun had destroyed the bolon-tiku right there. They should never have been allowed to run away from ah-Puch's palace, they should never have been allowed to escape and



continue their wicked innovations. But in truth Sun doesn't even see them, they are beneath his notice, they will slink around for ages before the other gods and goddesses put them in their place for all time. Sun turns away from the bolon-tiku and hunts through ah-Puch's palace. Into the fallen rooms he goes, evil men and evil spirits drop to their knees and weep for fear in every place he treads. Sun doesn't see them. His eyes are only for his brother, ah-Puch alone occupies his thoughts.

So at last he finds ah-Puch in a great room at the far end of his palace, this is where ah-Puch has chosen to stand against Sun. It is an empty room, there were things in it but they have all been released into the world. It is the room where ah-Puch keeps his twisted inventions until they are ready for dispersal. Sun comes to the door of that room and sees ah-Puch, he steps into that place and says, "Good morning, brother. I have brought something for you."

"And what is that?" says ah-Puch, whose head is down. Truly ah-Puch is frightened, his heart is beating fast and he cannot think. Never has Sun shone so fiercely. ah-Puch fears he is about to be destroyed, it is his first humbling and is most painful to him.

"Something you yourself have invented. I bring you your own death," says Sun. And here is Sun lunging across the room and swinging his fist, the backhand takes ah-Puch across the face. ah-Puch's nose disappears in a gout of blood, his lips are torn open in a dozen places and release their own red droplets. The fists of Sun move fast now, there is the sound crack, crack, crack as his brother is knocked around and slammed into the walls. Down ah-Puch goes onto his knees, his eyes roll back and his teeth are red with his own blood. Sun is not fooling around, the deaths of his people have taken all playfulness from him. His foot flies up and takes ah-Puch alongside his head, thwock is the sound of the blow, ah-Puch is knocked onto his side and thinks, this is the end.

But ah-Puch is not the younger brother, and Sun is not the older. These two gods were born in the same instant. Sun was born from the red plumeria flower, ah-Puch was born from the black plumeria flower, those petals unfolded in the same heartbeat and released these two gods at the same time. They are equals, they are evenly matched in power.

They say a man does not know his strength until he is tested, and so it was for ah-Puch. He is knocked down by Sun and on his knees, the blood is flowing in streams from his face, Sun's heat has blistered his flesh. This is when ah-Puch learns he cannot stand against Sun's full strength, and he will never again look his brother square in the face. The night



becomes the natural home of ah-Puch, the brothers will only glimpse each other from a distance from that time forth.

But ah-Puch also learns that Sun's greatest blows cannot kill him and can only knock him to his knees. Here is ah-Puch performing the impossible, he rises to his feet and summons to him his black obsidian blade. Slash, slash, slash goes the knife of the night, Sun's skin parts and the muscle underneath is revealed. Back staggers Sun, under the slashing of the black knife. And now there is another new thing, another innovation: Sun in his fear and pain cries out for a weapon of his own, and there it is. It was there all the time, it was born with him, but he has never used it before and never knew it was there. Into Sun's hands appears a staff of red chacte wood, bloodwood this is called, it is heavily carved with sacred symbols and becomes fire in the hands of the sun. It is a rod of fire that Sun now holds. Whoosh goes the bloodwood staff, its end swings around in Sun's hands and bounces off ah-Puch's skull, and his head snaps to the side. Even gods would die from such a blow, there is no spirit in all the creation that could withstand such force, and ah-Puch's blood is a geyser blasting out of his head. ah-Puch is knocked to the side and smacks into the wall and bounces, he weaves like a drunk. This is when ah-Puch's face is broken, his handsomeness is knocked aside and all the wickedness in him is revealed. Sun did that to him, no one else ever could.

Whoosh goes the bloodwood staff, right into ah-Puch's gut, this time the blood shoots from ah-Puch's mouth. ah-Puch is weeping with pain from all this punishment, he has never dreamed there can be so much hurt in the world. But again, he is as great as his brother, and when the bloodwood staff swings around the third time the black knife meets it, and it is stilled. Now it is Sun who stumbles, and slash goes the black knife, and the skin and muscle over Sun's heart are parted. ah-Puch has decided to cut Sun's heart out, he bends himself now to that purpose.

For a long time it is the two of them in this dance of murder. There is whooshing and slashing, there are thrusts and feints, the feet of both gods move quickly this way and that as those two seek to put each other to an end. The black knife is invincible, its edge takes ever more blood from the sun, and at the same time more and more of ah-Puch's bones crack under the blows of the bloodwood staff. Sun is amazed, here he is the lord of all creation, the very builder of everything, and his brother is bowed before him but not broken. The walls of that room are knocked down, the floor is cracked and splintered. All the furnishings are destroyed. Sweat flies from the two gods and spatters and evaporates in Sun's heat.



Then there is the moment when they realize that neither can defeat the other. It is unbelievable, neither one can accept it, but it is true. Back they step, ah-Puch goes one way and Sun another, and they are staring hard at each other in the half-light of the underworld.

In the garden of the gods all the lesser gods and goddesses are in hiding, they are unnerved by the sounds of the fight in the underworld. None of them can even stand in the same world as Sun when he is enraged. But Moon is still sensible. She was born three heartbeats after Sun and ah-Puch, her flower unfolded only moments after theirs. Some people say that this means women are weaker than men, because Moon was born after the two male gods, and some say that women are more thoughtful because Moon had longer to ponder things in her white plumeria flower, and so women stand aside when hot-blooded men cut each other up. It is hard to say who is correct. But it is true that there are not just two great gods, but three. Though she is young in those days, it is Moon's greatness that has not yet been revealed.

So here is the coming of Moon to the underworld, she cannot believe the noise of the fighting between Sun and ah-Puch and must see for herself what is happening. She has spent forever trying to talk the other gods and goddesses into assisting Sun, trying to talk the animal lords into helping Sun, but they are all too weak and therefore useless. It is an annoyed and frustrated Moon who rides a beam of silvered light down to the underworld and sees what it looks like when an entire world is on fire. She is dizzy by smoke and made sick by the sight of all the dead servants of ah-Puch. Corpses lie about as far as she can see. Sun killed them all with his fire, he has not yet learned mercy. Moon is lost to herself as she follows Sun's black footprints melted into the stone steps of ah-Puch's palace. Through the chambers she goes, and then she is in the room of the bolon-tiku, but they are long since fled. For a few heartbeats she thinks she is alone, but then she hears a growl and turns to see another in that place. It is Lord Jaguar, he was strong enough to stand his ground. Maybe it's just that Sun never looked at him directly as he did the bolon-tiku, or maybe it is true that Jaguar is really that strong. After all, he is the lord of all animals, that is no small thing.

Jaguar goes pad pad pad across the stone floor and is standing only a few steps away from Moon. Moon wonders at Jaguar because he is not the same animal she met before. Sun's passing has burnt his fur golden



on the top and sides of his body, but there are black marks all over him from the night, and his belly is black as tar.

“You shall not pass,” are Jaguar’s words to Moon. His teeth are visible, his claws are out, the hairs on the back of his neck stand up. Moon can see that she cannot fight this great animal lord. She is not a warrior, the raised weapon is not her way.

“I have something for you,” she says to Jaguar, and she raises her hand and wiggles her fingers.

Jaguar looks at that hand, he is thinking of reaching out with his claws and tearing it off her arm.

“My master is busy killing that burning god,” Jaguar says to Moon. “When that is done he will come for you. You are good enough to be his whore, that will be your place in things.” Jaguar says this with contempt and small regard, he doesn’t think much of Moon. He knows he is more powerful and hardly gives her a thought.

Moon holds out her hand so that Jaguar can see that there is no weapon there, and then she reaches to Jaguar and touches his ears. She gives little scratches here and there, her moonlight turns the tufts inside his ears to brilliant white. It is all Moon can do not to giggle when she sees this, here is a little of her power on this great animal. Moon’s fingers touch Jaguar’s snout and turn it white, and then she lowers his hand to Jaguar’s belly and gives great scratches. Jaguar begins to purr, he is defeated by pleasure. His leg begins to thump on the floor, he gives a huge grin and sits down and raises his head for Moon to scratch under his chin. His belly fur turns moon-white, and the hair under his chin turns white, and when Moon crouches down and scratches his feet they too turn white under her touch. That is why today the jaguar has three colors, all three of the greatest gods have put their marks on him. But when one-colored jaguars are born they are always black. That is how we know they are ah-Puch’s creation and not Sun’s, the mark of the night is strongest on this animal. So now every jaguar is free to serve any of the three great gods as they choose, this is the only animal strong enough to pick its own master.

Over and over Moon scratches Jaguar, the pleasure goes through him in tingles, goes through him in waves. He falls onto his back and reveals his belly. Moon is merciless with her gift. Soon Jaguar is asleep, this defender of ah-Puch is totally defeated by the thin fingers of a young woman. Moon continues her journey through ah-Puch’s destroyed palace. Room after room she explores, she turns away from all the death and



hides her face from the wickedness she finds there. At last she comes to the room where ah-Puch and Sun are standing and catching their breath. The wounds on those two are beyond belief. Moon can only look at them and marvel at their hate. That is when she discovers the fierceness in her own heart. She does not want to release either of these gods, she wants them both for herself. They were both with her at the creation, she feels that to accept one over the other would be to lose half of her very being. She will not tolerate this. Her life in Sun's garden has been very easy, Sun sees that food is plentiful and her life contains no sorrows. So she feels that she should not have to give up anything, there is no reason to make choices at all.

Here is Moon walking in there with all the spit and the sweat and the blood and the fire. There are patches of darkness from ah-Puch, in the corners, and there are flames where the furnishings used to be. Moon walks right up to those two and seizes their arms, one hand on each god. They are startled by her strength, they have never felt her firmness before.

"This is over now," she says to them. "You will stop fighting, and you will get along again. Live in separate palaces if you must, but I will see both of you. I will go between light and darkness as I wish and have what I want. Neither of you will strike down the other, I forbid it." She looks from one to the other, and there is duplicity as ah-Puch hides his wickedness from her. He still desires her, weak as he thinks she is. So does Sun. Moon is lovely in her radiance, she has the scent of youth, and though those two are thinking of her with a little more respect for stating her position, both feel they can easily have her in the old way again, once they have disposed of each other.

Moon sees their disregard for each other and squeezes their arms tighter. Blood runs over her fingers, her hands slip because there is so much blood. But her strength is undeniable, and both those gods turn toward her.

Then ah-Puch tries to shrug her off, and Sun does the same. They both jerk their shoulders and pull their arms, they both push at Moon. She won't let go, her face is set and her lips are a hard line. Her eyebrows are knit.

"Do you hear me?" she says to them. "I will have you both. I will come and go from one to the other. You will not degrade me by taking the other from me. I forbid it."

Maybe it's the word 'forbid' that these two gods don't like. No one forbids either of them anything. They punch at Moon now, gone is their



gentleness. Their blows rain down on her, but she will not let go. Things are getting more serious between the three of them.

Out goes Moon's hands, first Sun's head rocks back from her slap, then ah-Puch's. Her voice has gone hard and cutting, and she says, "This fight is finished now."

And those two gods have had enough of Moon. Sun seizes one arm, and ah-Puch seizes the other. They pull her this way and that, they push her around. She pushes back, she slaps at them, she calls them dickless and stupid. No one has heard taunting before, it is Moon's own innovation, and those two don't like it one bit. Fists are made and thrown, Moon is bruised and battered. All three of them grow hot and angry. Sun flickers alight again, ah-Puch's lips pull back in a snarl, Moon is screeching. Those two men grab Moon by the arms and legs and pull at her and shout at her to shut up, they try to throw her aside but she hangs on and won't let go. All three of them forget themselves, their fury is up and they twist and wrench at each other. But in the end it is not a fair fight, there are two men and only one woman. Suddenly Moon's face is shocked and surprised. Her body is not strong enough. The two male gods give her a hard yank, and Moon is torn in half. Her body rips open, her guts spill out, her rib cage cracks up the middle. Blood flies everywhere. Her very head breaks into two pieces, and her brains fall out. She is just meat and pooling blood, the life flees from her.

The two gods drop the pieces of her and stand there, and it is at this time that they are most revealed. ah-Puch begins to laugh. He kicks at Moon, and he calls her a silly bitch, and then he spins in a delighted circle. Never has ah-Puch seen anything so pathetic or funny as the look on her face when she died, now there is one less great god and only one left to destroy. ah-Puch will rule alone, he doesn't need a woman by his side when he has the bolontiku for company.

"Ha, ha, ha," laughs ah-Puch, he does a little dance of death, up on his tiptoes. "Did you see that ridiculous look, Sun?" he says. For a moment even his anger at his brother is forgotten. It is the first time a god has died, and now ah-Puch knows it can be done. He is always pleased with more knowledge of destruction, it is enough to take away his anger.

But Sun isn't laughing. He is full of emotion and can't even name what he is feeling. Tears begin to pour down his face, fiery tears raise white blisters on his skin.

His brother is amazed at this. "Why are you weeping, brother? She is nothing, there are plenty of other women. If you want sex just screw



your own creations, why else make them? Forget this one.”

All the fight goes out of Sun. He doesn't even look at his brother, he feels sorry for ah-Puch because his brother is revealing himself to have no heart at all. He summons a net bag and puts into it all the pieces of Moon, all her guts and parts. He even scoops blood into the net bag, but it runs out. He summons a sunbeam and rises up out of ah-Puch's palace, back to the garden of the gods and his own home. He does not look at his brother, he will never again look ah-Puch in his broken face. Their anger is gone, but their hate remains.

Sun drops Moon on the floor of his palace, and there is a small miracle, too small for Sun to notice: her blood drips down through the cracks in the paving stones of Sun's palace and soaks through the ground and then drips from the garden of the gods into our world. There is a lot of it, all this blood drips down through the air and into a hollow peak called First Mountain. It is a magical place that came into being by itself early in the creation. It is in our world, far far away. There is dirt inside that place, and light and heat from early in the creation. Moon's blood soaks into the magical soil of that place, and sure enough, something is created from it. Maize sprouts out of the ground, green shoots raise themselves and then grow tall and strong. The heads form all by themselves, and the tassels grow out, and the ears ripen. A new god is born, the Maize God rises from the blood-soaked soil and becomes the patron of all corn.

Sun doesn't see this. Sun doesn't see anything, in the state he is in. Moon is not a strong creator. Some of her children are, but she isn't. Sun has laughed at her sometimes for this, for making only small things and not big things like he himself does. But he is realizing now that he has made it all for her, he has made everything in the world either to please Moon or to annoy her, or to amaze her. He is finding that he does not have a place without her, his life is as hollow as First Mountain.

The other gods and goddesses, all the lesser ones that fill Sun's palace, come out of their hiding places and see the tears of the sun, and they grieve even without knowing why. One by one they sit down in council. No one speaks, Sun's misery is so strong it takes their voices away. Sun puts his hand over Moon's remains, and they are incinerated. What is left of her turns to ash and then to soot, she becomes nothing more than a black smudge on the floor of Sun's palace. Then Sun just sits there and stares. The animal lords come and sit with those gods and goddesses, they too are grieving for Sun. No one can say anything.

Who can say which of them is the very first to conceive a spectacular new idea? Maybe none of them, maybe it took them all working together.



One of them reaches out and wipes a hand on the smudge and comes away with blackened fingers. Then another one does it. Then one of the animal lords reaches out a paw and takes up some soot. Before long all of them have blackened paws and fingertips, and there is nothing left on the floor. Sun doesn't comment on this, he is not truly there any more. The life is ebbing from him, without Moon. All this time his tears flow.

The gods and the goddesses and the animal lords mumble, and they murmur, and they chant. They say their power words, they pool their strengths, each bares his or her wisdom. There is great magic in that council, and great power.

Someone flicks a hand, and a fleck of soot flies onto the floor and becomes flesh. But it is whole flesh, not torn, however small it might be. And an animal lord flicks a paw, and another piece of Moon is restored. Each piece is tiny, so small it can hardly be seen, it is no mean feat to restore a great goddess to life. It takes dozens of them, great and small, to even have a chance. The council goes on for days, servants bring food and drink and keep them all fed. Their voices rise and fall, rise and fall. They go hoarse, and they recover their voices again. Who can say how long all this takes? In the end Moon's dead body lies on the floor, whole and unbroken, but her spirit is gone.

Here is the coming of the king of the animals, Lord Jaguar has decided to venture to the garden of the gods. No one can stop him, no one tries to. He is not afraid of any of them. He is not a sentimental lord, Jaguar, but he remembers Moon's scratching and wants more. So he walks past that council as they debate what to do with a Moon who is complete again but lifeless. Jaguar goes to the tree of life and stretches his powerful muscles and slides out his claws. None of them see this, or they might be frightened of him. Up the tree of life he goes, his claws carve long furrows in the bark but he does not slide back or fall. His ears are laid flat against his head from his concentration, and it takes a long time to get to the upper branches where he is going. Then pad pad pad he walks out along the branches, searching here and there, until at last he finds that special white flower that is Moon's alone. It is her spirit, separated from her body and returned to the tree of life to be reborn as somebody else.

"Not this time," are Jaguar's words. He takes that flower in his mouth and plucks it as fine as day, and then back down the trunk he goes. Going down is even harder than going up, there is pounding in Jaguar's head from the blood rushing down his body. Maybe a bird could have done



this task more easily, but no bird thought of it. Jaguar alone thinks of cheating death and bringing Moon's soul back. His reasons are entirely selfish, this is Jaguar's way, it is hard for him to think of anyone but himself. Into the palace of Sun he pads, with his head held high. There is no one else there. The other animal lords have given up and returned to their places, the other gods and goddesses have given up and returned to their own places. Jaguar will always think less of them for this, he will never forgive their weakness. He belongs to the three great ones only, the others have no hold on him.

Lord Jaguar goes to Moon's body and drops her white-flower soul right into her heart. Her eyes fly open, and the first thing she sees is not Jaguar but Sun and all his tears. Jaguar will eventually get the scratching he craves, don't worry, but for now he must sit at the side and wait his turn.

"What is wrong with you?" Moon says to Sun. Then she remembers everything. She remembers being torn in half, and she remembers ah-Puch laughing at her death, and she remembers the sorrow of Sun. And there is tenderness, Moon rises onto her knees and gives many kisses to Sun, she doesn't just want sex any more but wants the compassion in him as well. In that moment she lets go of ah-Puch, there is no love in that god, what she had with him seems small and pitiful. ah-Puch will forever afterward be lonely, only when Moon feels sorry for him and comes to visit will he have any real companionship. He will have the bolon-tiku, in their evil and their weakness, and he will have endless servants and slaves, and for him that must be enough.

The kisses of Moon bring Sun back to himself, he takes her in his arms and loves her properly. That is when they stop being young and carefree and gain in wisdom and courage. They marry, and they have children, and they become Father Sun and Mother Moon as we know them today. Their love will grow very strong and become an example to the other gods and goddesses and an example to our ancestors as well. They were the first true lovers, the others until that time were only playing. Theirs are the very first children, and after that our ancestors began to have children as well. So it was that though ah-Puch released death into the world, Father Sun and Mother Moon released new life and the joys that children bring.

